

New York Divorce and Family Law Blog

[Relationships Move Online and Breaking Up Is Hard to Do](#)

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Break-ups were always difficult, but, with the advent of social networking, breaking up is now really hard to do.

It used to be a getting a key to your lover's apartment or a drawer in a dresser was a sign of commitment. When you broke up, you packed up your toothbrush and simply returned the key.

Now, a sign of commitment is exchanging passwords to email or online accounts (both social and financial). In addition, part of the evolution of a relationship entails becoming Facebook friends with your significant other's friends.

As [Laura Holson](#) points out in her article in the [New York Times](#), as every aspect of a relationship has moved online, the whole idea of break up has changed.

Where once a spurned lover could use scissors (literally) to cut an ex out of the picture, digital images of the smiling couple in happier days abound on the Web and are difficult to delete. Status updates and tweets have a way of wending their way back to scorned exes, thanks to the interconnectedness of social media. And breakups, awkward and drawn-out in person, are even more so online as details are parsed by the curious, their faces pressed against the digital glass.

It is common sense that following a break up of a relationship or the commencement of a divorce, passwords to bank and email accounts should be changed. Clearly, you would not want communications from your divorce lawyer discussing strategy to be read by your soon to be ex.

Unfettered access can also be used as a weapon. Just yesterday, when in court, I heard testimony in a case of cyber stalking, where one "heart broken" party possessed passwords to his ex's personal and business accounts and was being accused of attempting to delete and hide important online files.

Just imagine all the ways a scorned lover could destroy someone's personal and professional reputation armed with unfettered access to someone's twitter, Facebook and email accounts.

As Holson points out, "A byproduct of the digital revolution is that trust is being assigned a new meaning." Given the potential for damage and embarrassment, before sharing passwords, trust should yield to caution.